

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Loughgiel Early Years Centre,
Loughgiel, Co Antrim

Report of an Inspection in
November 2014

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*The Education and Training Inspectorate -
Promoting Improvement*

Providing Inspection Services for

Department of Education
Department for Employment and Learning
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

CUSTOMER
SERVICE
EXCELLENCE



Quantitative terms

In this report, proportions may be described as percentages, common fractions and in more general quantitative terms. Where more general terms are used, they should be interpreted as follows:

Almost/nearly all	-	more than 90%
Most	-	75%-90%
A majority	-	50%-74%
A significant minority	-	30%-49%
A minority	-	10%-29%
Very few/a small number	-	less than 10%

Performance levels

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) use the following performance levels in reports:

DESCRIPTOR
Outstanding
Very Good
Good
Satisfactory
Inadequate
Unsatisfactory

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1. Inspection method and evidence base

The key questions and quality indicators which guide inspection and self-evaluation of pre-school settings, which were applied to this inspection, are available in the ETI's publication *Together Towards Improvement: a process for self evaluation* at: [Together Towards Improvement Pre-school | Education and Training Inspectorate](#)

Inspectors observed teaching and learning through play, the children's achievements and standards, scrutinised relevant documentation, and held formal and informal discussions with children, and staff with specific responsibilities.

The arrangements for this inspection included:

- a discussion with the staff;
- a meeting with those involved with leadership and management; and
- the opportunity for the parents, staff and members of the management group to complete a confidential questionnaire.

The staff who responded to the questionnaire were very positive about all aspects of the life and work of the playgroup.

2. Context

Loughgiel Early Years operates in the Millennium Centre in Loughgiel, County Antrim. At the time of the inspection, one member of staff was temporary and another was newly appointed. The current leader was in post at the time of the previous inspection and is also the centre's early years specialist.

3. Focus of the inspection

The inspection focused on:

- the children's achievements and standards;
- the quality of provision; and
- the quality of leadership and management.

4. Overall findings

Overall Performance Level	Satisfactory
Achievements and Standards	Satisfactory
Provision	Satisfactory
Leadership and Management	Satisfactory

Key findings of the inspection

5. Achievements and Standards

- The children arrive happily and most settle quickly into the play activities provided by the staff. During the inspection, the quality of the children's play was mostly satisfactory. While a majority of the children were engaged in periods of sustained play, the overall flow of the session was disturbed by the behaviour of a minority of the children who were less well-settled. In these instances, the adults supported the children sensitively in building up important aspects of their personal, social and emotional development. Overall, most of the children behave well and respond positively to the adults, sharing their ideas and feelings freely; there is a need for the staff to agree and implement more consistent approaches to managing the support needs of individual children.
- For the time of year, most of the children display good levels of independence and confidence in many aspects of their free play, for example, in the craft, water and sand areas. Most of the children can make independent choices to access and use appropriately a variety of resources and equipment, including art materials, small tools and books. The children express their creative ideas imaginatively.
- The children's use of language and communication skills is variable. When given the opportunity, they enjoy books and most are able to listen well during story sessions. Most of the children engage in conversations with other children during play and at the snack table. The children's early mark making and writing is developing at an appropriate pace. Most of the children have an early understanding of some aspects of shape, size and number through play.

6. Provision

- The staff have created a stimulating learning environment in the playroom and appropriately, they are working towards the further development of the outdoor play. All of the available space for learning is used appropriately to encourage the children's independence and their free play.
- The staff interactions with the children range from satisfactory to very good; the overall quality is too variable. It is appropriate that the staff are currently focusing on developing greater consistency in this aspect of the provision. In the best practice observed, the adults asked open-ended questions, listened closely to the children's suggestions and included some appropriate vocabulary purposefully to extend the children's language and early mathematical understanding. On occasions when the interactions were more limited and supervisory, some good opportunities for extending the children's thinking were missed and thus the learning potential was not fully achieved.
- Overall, the children's educational programme is balanced and contains opportunities for learning in most areas of the pre-school curriculum. The system for observing, assessing and recording the children's progress and development does not currently link closely enough with the future planning. The planning does not highlight in sufficient depth what further actions the adults need to take in order to best meet the needs of all of the children. The staff need to improve the integration of the observations and assessments with the planning both to produce a clearer profile of each child's development and progression across the year and also to focus more sharply on maximising the learning potential in the planned programme.

- It is appropriate that the staff are undertaking training to extend their skills through their participation in the Early Years Special Educational Needs Capacity Building pilot. Overall, the staff need to be more proactive in identifying and responding to children's individual needs as they become apparent and to improve the quality and rigour of the individual education plans to ensure that the children who require additional support make the best possible progress in learning. As the staff implement the various strategies to support individual children, they need to evaluate the impact of the interventions on the children's progress and share this information more systematically with the parents.
- The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care is good. The playgroup has a child-centred ethos; the adults engage warmly with the children in their free play activities.
- The children are provided with healthy snacks and participate in a range of physical activities.

7. Leadership and management

- The dedicated leader is committed to the improvement of the provision and, together with the caring staff team, fosters positive relationships at all levels.
- Guided by the leader, who is also the early years specialist for the playgroup, the staff team is making more reflective use of all the available information, including the views of the parents, to inform their future actions for improving key areas of the provision. It will be important for the strategic planning to be consolidated more fully in order to bring about further improvement in the overall quality of the provision. In taking this important work forward, the staff would benefit from accessing external support and guidance.
- The staff have developed effective working links with the parents, the local community and neighbouring schools. The parents are welcomed into the playgroup and are given regular information about the provision.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the playgroup has comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements broadly reflect the guidance issued by the relevant Departments.

8. Conclusion

In most of the areas inspected, the quality of education provided in this playgroup is satisfactory; the strengths outweigh areas for improvement in the provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement which need to be addressed if the needs of all the children are to be met more effectively.

The areas for improvement are the need to:

- develop further the processes for observing, assessing and recording the children's progress in their learning to inform the planning, including the individual education plans, and best meet the children's specific individual needs; and

- build further the leadership capacity to identify and prioritise the key areas for development and the associated improvement actions.

The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor and report on the playgroup's progress in addressing the areas for improvement over a 12-24 month period.

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

1. Details of Children

Total number of children:	am session	pm session
attending the pre-school setting	20	
in their immediate pre-school year	15	
funded by Department of Education (DE)	15	
qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 & 2	14	
with a statement of special educational needs	0	
without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs	*	
with English as an additional language	0	
who left in previous school year to attend reception provision within a primary school	0	
Attendance:		
attendance** of funded children for the previous school year	92%	

* Special Educational Needs = fewer than five

** Calculated from the date when the intake was complete

2. Details of Staff

Number of:	Full-time	Part-time
Staff, including leader	3	
Number of staff holding a recognised child care qualification	3	
Number of staff holding a recognised teaching qualification	1	
New appointments within previous 12 months	1	

Number of: ***	
Students	1
Trainees	0

*** Total placements since September of current year

3. Details of Sessions

Duration of morning session	Duration of afternoon session
3½ hours	-

Health and Safety

- The staff need to carry out a risk assessment of the playroom door handle and lock as these are at a height which the children may access and open.
- Due to the shape and size of the playroom, some further consideration needs to be given to ensuring that that placement of furniture and equipment enables the adults to monitor the children freely.

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